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Testimony by Senator Mary Pilcher-Cook**House Redistricting Committee****Monday, May 7, 2012**

Speaker O'Neal and committee members, thank you for allowing me to testify before you today.

After growing up in Johnson County and being a resident there all of my life, it is easy to see how the area has developed and how it will develop in the future. Eastern Johnson County has always been the most populous, with more and more growth moving westward.

The eastern state senate districts which have become fully developed over the years are districts 7, 8 and 11. These are Sen. Huntington's, Sen. Owens' and Sen. Vratil's districts respectively. The Shawnee Mission School District just reminded us a few days ago that 37 schools have been closed in this region over the past ten years because of declining population.

Given the population decline in this area, I find it disconcerting that these senate districts in the *Ad Astra Revised* map were drawn with negative population deviations – and the numbers are not minimal. They are all negative: -3.85%, -3.91% and -3.81% respectively. However, other declining population areas in Kansas were drawn with positive population deviations – the western Kansas districts 39 and 40 were given positive correlations of 4.92% and 4.51%.

However, when the carrier of the bill was queried on these discrepancies with declining populations, he stated emphatically there is growth in northeast Johnson County. His statements do not bear up under the facts.

The population deviation decline in the eastern Johnson County districts 7, 8 and 11 is a total of 11,403 voters and comparatively, the population deviation decline in districts 39 and 40 in western Kansas is 14,879.

I have not yet heard a credible explanation with a consistent rationale for the population deviations drawn in the *Ad Astra Revised* map. Minor inconsistencies, of course, would be acceptable, but this looks like an example of tinkering with population to protect incumbency. When population is decreased, it doesn't cost as much money to send mailings to the voters and it doesn't require as much effort to communicate with the voters.

In addition, Senate District 8 had a 48 percent change in population – eliminating approximately 30,000 voters while sweeping in 30,000 new voters. When districts are changed that radically there should be a good reason for it but I have yet to hear any reasonable explanation from the designers of the *Ad Astra Revised* map for this drastic change.

My district, Senate District 10, was also radically changed. Currently, it consists of the entire city of Shawnee, Lake Quivira and a small portion of northeast Lenexa. Shawnee is the area where I grew up and it has been a pleasure to work hard to represent my neighbors and friends. The population deviation had grown to 9%, with an additional 6,387 voters, so some change is required. It is an area that is expected to continue growing.

However, the *Ad Astra Revised* map was drawn to chop off the entire western half of Shawnee and moved half of the district over into Merriam, mixing communities of interest, and swapping the population by at least 30 percent. The explanation given was that it was not “purposeful.” However, it is clear that drawing a map is always purposeful. If it was not purposeful, and the map was drawn by random chance, that doesn’t speak very well of the map.

I am confident the House can pass a better map that gives Johnson County good representation, and focuses on appropriate population deviations in the senate districts throughout Kansas.

An example of a good and nonpartisan map would be the *For the People 12* map, which you might consider as an alternative.

Just like the House map that was passed with bipartisan support, the *For the People 12* map is not controversial because it is a true compromise and is fair to Republicans and Democrats. The House has proven that drawing maps does not have to be a partisan endeavor.

In the *For the People 12* map, population deviations are consistent and below 2.5 percent, while county and municipal boundaries are protected in a reasonable manner. This map preserves existing districts as much as possible, drawn to be compact and contiguous, while keeping communities together that share common interests, and still avoids the dilution of minority voting power.

However, the *Ad Astra Revised* map is not bipartisan. Instead it is a purposeful division with wildly varying population deviations and current districts drastically redrawn with different boundaries. The *Ad Astra Revised* map promotes incumbent senators by drawing out opponents and reducing populations within incumbent senators’ districts. This is the same incumbency that has produced the fiscal crisis we have endured in Kansas over the past several years, greatly increasing the size of government by continually increasing taxes and escalating spending. It is political maneuvering of self-interests by those in power and it is inexcusable.

Thank you Mr. Speaker and committee members for taking a look at the Senate *Ad Astra Revised* map. I have confidence your committee will be much more impartial and fair in your deliberations, and design a much better map for Kansas citizens.